

### Poisonous Food Preservatives.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

The attention of meat consumers is especially called to Bulletin 15 of the Chemical Division of the United States Department of Agriculture, dealing with the effect upon the health of some of the preservatives now so extensively used in preserving "fresh" meats and other foods.

Dr. Wiley used for his experiment a class of twelve young men selected from among the employes of the Department. These were all picked men in perfect health, and of unusually regular habits. While under experimental supervision they were probably not over-burdened with work nor were they exposed to the nerve-wearing responsibilities which often fall to the lot of ordinary work-day people. The young men were boarded for a period of seven months at the government cost, and except as to the preservatives were fed regardless of expense. They enjoyed the fat of the land.

The following is the general conclusions reached by the government experts:

Boric acid or its equivalent in borax to the amount of four or five grams per day continued for some time resulted in loss of appetite and inability to perform work of any kind. The administration of three grams per day produced the same symptoms in many cases. In many cases the same results followed the administration of borax to the extent of two grams per day, and even of one gram." (A gram is the one-thirtieth part of an ounce.)

"On the whole the results show that one-half gram of borax per day was too much for the normal man to receive regularly. It appears therefore that both boric acid and borax when administered in small doses for a long period create disturbances of appetite, of digestion and of health."

In corroboration of Dr. Wiley's cautious and minimized condemnation of these, the least injurious of food preserving chemicals, it may be said from physiological knowledge and special observation, that these chemicals are normally excreted through the kidneys and bladder, and are likely to cause irritation of these organs, producing the disease known as "Bright's Disease" and catarrh of bladder.

Other preservative chemicals used upon sausage and "Hamburg Steak," especially sulphite of soda, are known to cause inflammation of the bowels.

The food chemist of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture has found boric acid upon much of the "fresh meat" he has examined. It is quite likely, therefore, that many valuable lives have been sacrificed and much ill-health suffered by reason of the unsuspected consumption of these poisonous chemicals. It is known to the writer that the market is well supplied with preservative chemicals advertised under fancy names, such as "Freezine," "Iceine," "Preservaline," etc., etc. These chemicals are persistently thrust under the notice of butchers and meat dealers by circulars and small samples. The circulars are very positive and vehement upon the great profits to be made by using these chemicals instead of the old fashioned way of ice, cleanliness and carefulness. "Cheaper than Ice." "Perfectly harmless." "Saves waste of scraps." "Keeps meat fresh for

many days in the hottest weather," are some of the seductive claims put forth by these circulars. It is well known that within the last ten years it has come to pass that most local butchers who formerly bought their cattle from neighboring farmers and killed and prepared their own meats, now buy their supplies from the largest packing houses located in Chicago, Kansas City and elsewhere. The inter-State traffic in "fresh meats" is in effect the creation of the last ten or twelve years. The traffic is, to a large extent, based upon the extensive use of preservatives, of which borax is the least objectionable. Meat killed in Chicago, before it reaches the local dealer in North Carolina, travels many hundreds of miles in freight cars which take many days in the journey. The meat itself is, in most cases, re-handled and trans-shipped one or more times en route.

Meat once frozen is well known to decay very quickly after it is thawed out. Without the general employment of preservatives the losses in handling Chicago meats would, in most North Carolina towns, make this business unprofitable.

By means of the secret and frequently denied use of chemicals to preserve meats sold to distant consumers as "fresh," the Chicago packers have been able to practically destroy the local markets for farm grown beef. While the farmer is robbed of his local market and the consumer poisoned, the general public receives no advantage, for the prices of meats are now even higher than when local meats alone were found upon the tables of butchers.

There seems no necessary reason why the public should be victimized in this matter. If people will refuse to buy chemically preserved meat, and require their butchers to warrant their fresh meats to be wholly free from every kind of preservative, we will soon see local slaughter houses in action once more. There are laws upon the statute books against fraud, against obtaining money under false pretences, and against secret dealing in poisons. The fining of a few meat dealers would have a salutary effect, and probably put a stop to the wholesale poisoning of people, who, in good faith, pay honest money for secretly boraxed meats.

GERALD McCARTHY,  
Biologist, North Carolina Department of Agriculture.  
Raleigh, N. C., Aug. 11, 1904.

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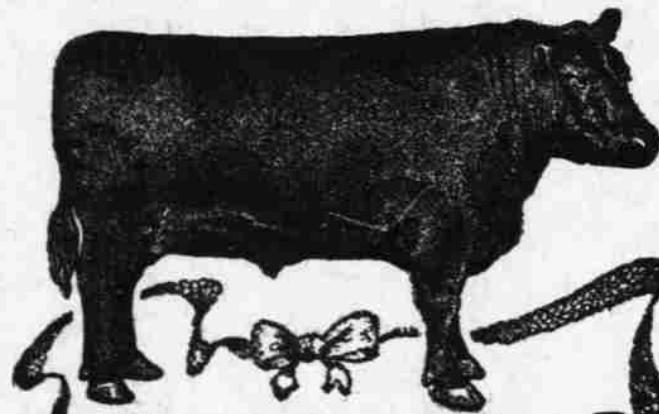
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